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ARTICLE VII.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE TELL-EL-AMARNA TABLETS.

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PROBABLY no discovery of antique records in the century now drawing to a close has surpassed, or even equalled in importance, that of the clay tablets, with Babylonish cuneiform script upon them, discovered in 1887, at Tell-el-Amarna, in Upper Egypt. The authority which I principally follow in the following remarks upon them, is that of Rev. A. H. Sayce, M. A., Deputy Professor of Comparative Philology in my own University of Oxford. His brilliant success in difficult decipherment of documents from seats of record, remote alike in time and place, has stamped him as second to none of the English-speaking race in that abstruse province of scholarship. No doubt the ardor of a young explorer in a previously untrodden field of research led him rather to overdraw the bow in some of his earlier estimates of Hittite suzerainty over Western Asia; and his depreciation of the authority of Herodotus, especially in the Egyptian section of that worthy's great work, has not commended itself to the common sense of scholars, but he seems, in attacking the actual symbols of an antique syllabary, to be guided by the true instinct of archæological scholarship; and he happened to be engaged in the perennial harvest of antiquities on the banks of the Nile, when the report reached Cairo of a "treasure trove" of unusual interest, together with a number of the tablets of which it consisted, destined for the Boulaq Museum. A much larger number found their way soon after to

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guments fail in the very important respect that, even if they could prove a creator, they would not prove him infinite. They all appear to imply that dependence is found somewhere; but their authors do not seem to know where to locate it. So, while in form they ignore it, their arguments have force only as they assume it, for it must be the vital principle of them all.

The doctrine of evolution has been pressed into service to account for the origin of things. It is a sounding line that can never touch bottom. It may possibly give a general history of the development of things; but can never give their source. This must be gotten from a perception of the nature of things, as the apostle Paul says: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." A knowledge of the divine existence can never be gained from testimony. If any number of men should testify that they had seen an infinite body of matter we would know that their testimony was false. Every revelation of personality is necessarily finite. If God should testify to his own infinity, it would only produce belief, and not knowledge. The Bible assumes a general knowledge of his existence in its very opening sentence. The nature of things had already revealed him.

the Berlin Museum, and eighty-two have since become the property of the trustees of the British Museum in London. But all alike now form part of the heritage of world-wide scholarship.

The first thought of Professor Sayce pointed to the period of Nebuchadrezzar's subjugation of Egypt, when of course Babylonish script would be current in the line of march of that conqueror. But a less superficial glance showed the tablets to be vastly older, being an entire collection of despatches from foreign dependents or distant potentates to two Pharaohs of a pre-Mosaic date, Amenophis the Third and the Fourth. The broad results, historical and literary, which they at once clearly established were: (1) an Egyptian supremacy over Palestine and a large part of Syria in the fifteenth or even sixteenth century B. C., and (2) the prevalence, for diplomatic intercourse, of the Babylonish language and script, west of the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, extending, in these reigns, to Egypt itself. This latter fact implies a diffusion of Babylonish culture and influence only derivable from an ascendency of that empire over these western regions at a period previous to that of this Egyptian supremacy. Babylon had overrun Palestine still earlier, and made the Great Sea its landmark westward in the centuries of the patriarchs, or possibly before Abram's migration, and when Egypt wrested those provinces from her, had left on them the impress of her civilization.

Now this shows us Babylon and Egypt rehearsing, as it were, a thousand years previously, that struggle which culminated eventually in the overthrow of Josiah and the breaking up of Judah's independence. But in this earlier period a third factor of conquest appears upon the scene, viz., the Hittite warriors, who, pushing down from the north, disputed the mastery of Palestine with the Egyptians; and who, in the days of Abraham and Isaac, appear centrally established as the dominant race; but whom the Pharaohs

of the following centuries down to the Exodus successfully challenged and checked. Two main results followed, again historical and literary: (1) Canaan, exhausted by the long struggle of which she was the victim, rather than the prize, made a comparatively feeble resistance to the Israelite invasion under Joshua; and (2) Babylonish influence, with its language and script, was displaced and driven out. Professor Sayce puts it thus: "A knowledge of cuneiform writing ceased to extend westward of the Euphrates, and for a while the inhabitants of Syria had to be content with the hieroglyphs of the Hittites. But it was not long before the practical traders of Phœnicia devised a better means of recording their thoughts or registering their cargoes."

But all this fails to explain how Babylonish and cuneiform superseded, during these reigns, the native language and script of Egypt itself. Why do we find two Pharaohs, father and son,—and, it seems, two only,—after having displaced in Palestine the ascendency of Babylon and established their own, yet clothing their diplomatic intercourse in the linguistic garb of their worsted rivals? The fact underlying this startling adoption of alien usage is, that they had strong Asiatic sympathies, through either affinity or blood. Amenophis III. married an Euphratic princess of masculine and resolute character, who brought with her Asiatic followers, ideas, speech, and form of faith. Under her influence her husband, and yet more her son, gave those ideas and that faith a dominant position. "The favorites and officials of the Pharaoh, his officers in the field, his correspondents abroad, bore names which showed them to be of Canaanite and even of Israelite origin. If Joseph and his brethren had found favor among the Hyksos princes of an earlier day, their descendants were likely to find equal favor at the court of the heretic king." These Pharaohs belong to the eighteenth dynasty. With the nineteenth came the reaction of native influence against these ideas imported from beyond

the Euphrates. Its founder seems to have been "the new king who knew not Joseph," and his successor Ramses II., the Pharaoh of the oppression, carried anti-Semitic reassertion to the extreme; but up to the end of the eighteenth dynasty the sympathies of the royal house were predominantly Semitic. Until these facts were established by these tablet records, Egyptologists were puzzled; because they had assumed "the new king" to have been an early one of the eighteenth dynasty, and the whole of its remaining links to lie between him and that Ramses II. Larger knowledge reconciles, as usual, the Exodus narrative with the monuments, and they become its vouchers. But as we *know* the monuments to be contemporaneous, this strongly suggests that the Bible narrative also was from contemporaneous sources. If it had been a mere later decoction diluted with inferior authority, we should have found the usual discrepancies between its statements and the record of obelisk or tablet. And this discrepancy, deepening into confusion of dynasties, is, by contrast, excellently exemplified in the extract from Manetho, given by Josephus,[1] in which "the lepers" to the number of eighty thousand, being expelled the country by Amenophis, coalesced with the descendants of the Hyksos, who had now settled in Jerusalem, and overran and ravaged Egypt; until Amenophis, returning from Ethiopia, where he had found refuge, drove them out of the land with their leader, who had taken the name of Moses. The dominance of the Hykso-Semitic race and their "expulsion"—a pseudo-historic term for the "Exodus," as we know it—belong not to different kings, but to different dynasties. Manetho thus mixes up that Amenophis IV., who was the great patron of Semitic ideas, with the Meneptah, son of Ramses II., who sought to stamp them out. The same tablets condemn the confusion of Manetho which illustrate and establish the veracity of sacred record.

[1] Contra Apion, i. 26–35.

But, to return to the earlier relations of Egypt with Palestine, the tablets show a period "when the towns of Palestine were garrisoned by Egyptian troops, and, though its governors bore Semitic names, they were officials of the Egyptian king. Egyptian influence and supremacy extended through Syria, as far as the banks of the Euphrates." It was a period the now established features of which confront with rebuke and refutation the brazen effrontery of modern criticism. This latter had long refused to recognize any source of Babylonish lore as penetrating to Palestine, until the Captivity shot Palestine, as it were, into Babylon; and allowed the beginnings of written Hebrew literature as only possible about the reign of David. We now know that Babylonish culture spread "to the Great Sea westward" long before the Hebrew race had grown into a nation, and that writing, so far from being rare in the region, was abundant before the Phœnician alphabet had emerged as yet from the coast-towns of its nativity. Thus the assumption that early Hebrew facts could not have had a written embodiment until long after they had dissolved into tradition, vanishes before the tablets of Tell-el-Amarna. The affinities between early patriarchal and Babylonish ideas, and the many coincidences of their respective records, become at once natural and normal. The name Kirjath-sepher, "book-town," is at once explained. It was presumably, like Tell-el-Amarna, a great depository of record. Its other name, Debir, "sanctuary," suggests that in some chief temple of that city those records were kept; but they were almost certainly in the Babylonish syllabary and character, and "it may be that they are still lying under the soil, awaiting the day when the spade of the excavator shall restore them to light. . . . Long before the Exodus, then, Canaan had its libraries, its scribes, its schools and literary men," and "a new light is thus thrown on royal lists like that contained in Genesis xxxvi. Why should this not be an extract from the chronicles of Edom originally

written in the cuneiform syllabary of Babylonia? A connection with Babylonia is indicated by the statement that Saul, one of that dynastic list, came from Rehoboth, or 'the city streets by the river' Euphrates, more especially when it is remembered that Saul or Sawul is the Babylonish name of the sun-god."

An even more striking attestation of early Babylonish influence in Palestine is the number of local names which commemorate Chaldean deities. The "Nebo" of Moses' death scene thus brings back to us the god of literature—as it were the Apollo round whom the Muses group themselves —in ancient Babylon. Rimmon, Molech, Anat (retraced in "Anathoth") and Sin, the moon-deity, are all members of the same Pantheon; even Sinai itself being denominative from this latter. The "Rephan" or "Chiun" of Amos v. 26, under whatever forms of transcription we accept them, are certainly star-deities, and almost certainly Babylonish deities, which gives further point to the prophetic threat, "Therefore I will carry you away beyond Babylon." The Ashtaroth preserved in Ashtaroth-Karnaim, which superseded the native Ashera of Palestine, is Babylonish likewise in origin, its primary form there being "Ishtar."

The fair inference from the fact of not merely inscribed monuments, or a few casual slabs of private documentary character, but an entire public record office, being thus unearthed, with contents apparently complete for their period, and even classified and docketed, and that period earlier by a century at least than the Exodus, surely is that the Hebrew race were not an unlettered, half-savage horde, either when they passed out of Egypt or when they entered into Canaan. Moses himself may have been acquainted with the cuneiform among other "wisdom of the Egyptians" or may have had in his camp scribes who were so. The records of ancient dynasties and genealogies which *in situ* have long since perished, may have been familiar to his range of study. All

that Mount Seir had to tell of vanished races, the Zamzummim, the Horim, the Avim and Caphtorim, all that could be gathered from Ar of Moab or Ammon Rabbah, the wisdom of Teman, the derivation of the Philistine race, the affinities of Midian with Moab, and of the latter with "Pethon" and "the river of the land" of Balaam's "people," the *mashalim* of Heshbon, and the divining methods of Balaam himself, may have all been to him an open book. The Joshuan demarcation and allotment of tribal territory, which imply a considerable degree of land-surveying power, and of measurements adjusted and recorded, need no longer be a stumbling-block to critics. Not even the fragmentary and confused narratives of the book of Judges are now open to question on the ground of defective recording power at the time.

As regards the ascertainable relations of Egypt with the various nationalities or tribes grouped between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates or Mesopotamian valley, Professor Sayce remarks that, "Phœnicia seems to have been the farthest point to the North to which the direct government of Egypt extended. At any rate the letters which came to the Egyptian monarch from Syria and Mesopotamia were sent to him by princes who called themselves his 'brothers,' and not by officials who were the 'servants' of the king. Doubtless many of these princes were but semi-independent, and in case of war were required to assist the Egyptian government." Thus, in the former case, the local ruler was a native king; in the latter, also, mostly a native, but merely selected by the Egyptian monarch, and responsible to him for tribute, and for the maintenance of order and authority. Semitic names of places or persons, nearly identical with known Hebrew forms, are often traceable in these despatches. Thus we find "the city of Tsumuru or Simyra, the 'Zemar' of Gen. x. 18" described in one of them as "very strongly fortified 'like a bird whose nest is built on a precipice.'" The names of Zidon probably, and of Tyre,

Acre, and Megiddo certainly, occur on another. Rib-Addu represents probably the title Rab and the well-known Syrian name Hadad. Again we have Yapa-Addu, the former element being probably the equivalent of יפא, fair or beautiful, and Aziru, which seems to be the biblical אזר, both being names of subordinate officers; while Ebed-Tob, "Servant of the Good," is pure Hebrew. The Semitic special force of the number seven comes out in the phrase of deference, with which the official letter of the governor often opens, "At the feet of my lord the king *seven times seven* do I prostrate myself." The "king of the Hittites" comes in for mention in the despatch from Phœnicia, probably as a northern or northwestern neighbor. Another from the Philistine coast-land gives us a picture of turbulent neighbors, and mentions names of cities which probably represent Gezer (1 Kings ix. 16, 17), Gath, and Keilah. We read here that "a raid was made; Milki (*Melech*) of the sea-coast (marched) against the country of the king," with the forces of the cities just named at his disposal. Then follows a mention of "the city of Rabbah," and of the "Chabiri," perhaps meaning men of Hebron, or possibly, as it would in Hebrew, "the confederates." Some potentate in the same insecure neighborhood, writes the official, "made war against thee for the third time. The men of Keilah [whose loyal support seems to have been looked for, since "Ebed-Tob sent" them "fourteen pieces of silver"] sided with the enemy;" "they marched against my rear, and they overran the domains of the king, my lord." Then among the items of loss occur "the fortress of Baal-Nathan" and that "of Hamor," the "city of Gaza," as also Kirjath (-Sepher, or -Arba); and among the personal names Milki-ar'il, which combines *melek*, king, with *ariel*, hero, in a compound resembling Melchizedek.

One tablet contains the name of Dudu, which Professor Sayce equates with David, thus showing its use long before the son of Jesse bore it. This Dudu appears as the father

of Aziru, perhaps the same sub-official already mentioned, who seems to have had some charge of royal demesnes, as he speaks of laying the foundations of a palace and a temple, and of laying out gardens, planting, etc. He appears to have got leave of absence, and contemplates returning home. Both Dudu the father, and Aziru the son were, it seems, in the service of the Pharaoh. The despatches of royal personages mostly relate to presents, sent, intended, or expected, —one chief form of traffic which prevailed at the time being the commerce of such gifts between kings. But one remarkable tablet, the deciphering of which seems to depend more on conjecture than the rest, is believed to be in a Hittite dialect, and relates, if rightly interpreted, to the marriage of a Hittite prince with a daughter of the Pharaoh, who among his "dowry and gifts" (Gen. xxxiv. 12) "sent twenty manehs of gold and one hundred shekels of lead." The name of the Hittite prince, "Tarkhundaras," corresponds with similar Hittite names found on Assyrian monuments, and Rezeph (2 Kings xix. 12) in northwestern Mesopotamia is the region of his rule.

Now here we have a state of things exactly reflected by the notice in Ex. xiii. 17, 18, "God led them [Israel] not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near: for God said, lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about," etc. There has never before been any special reason discoverable in history for the prospect of "war" in this direction. Commentators on the text rely on the generally warlike character of the Philistines, as known in the subsequent books, to explain it. We now see that the Inspired Word sits far closer to the facts than such generalizations would require or suggest. The attempts of the Pharaohs to maintain suzerainty, enforce tribute, and impose rulers, not merely naturally *would*, but, we now know, actually *did*, provoke the combative instincts of the Philistines;

who, although suspicious and unfriendly on a territorial question to Isaac, yet had allowed both him and Abraham to sojourn peacefully within their border (Gen. xx., xxvi.). The normal state was, therefore, like that of the Scottish border in mediæval history. The only warlike indications cited by Professor Sayce from these tablets are those from this frontier. It is probable that the other Canaanite and Phœnician tribes acquiesced in the rule of the Pharaoh, and that the Philistines alone resisted it. Therefore the notice of Exodus suggests an author with contemporary knowledge of facts, where the "higher criticism" sees some unknown "Elohist" of David's time or later. The cursory way in which the bellicose state of facts is referred to, as too familiar at the time to need special emphasis,—"lest the people repent *when they see war*"—without raising the question whether they themselves would be the object of hostility or not, is exactly suited to such an author, with such surroundings, as we may conceive Moses to have been. It also accounts for his own choice of the land of Midian for a refuge from "the wrath of the king" (Ex. ii. 15; Heb. xi. 27); since, under the conditions disclosed by the tablets, no asylum among the footsteps of the earlier patriarchs could be secure. He would have probably found every town of any size held by an Egyptian garrison.

The imminence of the Hittite advance along the Levant litoral must have been a cloud on the political horizon as viewed from Egypt northward. But they also struck eastward into the interior region and "a dispatch now at Berlin contains an urgent request from one of the cities of Syria for help against the Hittites, whose forces were advancing southwards." We see how the Pharaoh endeavored to convert the doubtful potentate into an ally, viz., by affinity through his daughter. Similar was the policy of a later Pharaoh in the case of Solomon. Another mode of cementing union, of course with advantage to the stronger power, was through

the interchange of presents; of which we have a sample in somewhat full detail in the case of the king of Alasiya, "a country which lay to the east of Arvad . . . . though it also seems to have possessed a port on the sea-coast." This king writes: "'To the king of Mitsri' [Mizraim, Egypt] my lord; I speak by letter, I . . . thy brother. I am at peace, and unto thee may there be peace! To thy house, thy daughters, etc., thy multitudinous chariots, thy horses, and in thy land of Mitsri, may there be peace! O, my brother, my ambassador has carefully surveyed a costly gift for them, and has listened to thy salutation. This man is my minister, O my brother. Carefully has he conveyed to them the costly gift."

Another letter, ascribed to the same, has: "Now have I sent [thee] as presents a sea(?) of bronze, three talents of hard bronze, the tusk of an elephant, a throne, and the hull(?) of a ship. These gifts, O my brother, this man [brings in] this ship of the king [my lord], and do thou in return send a costly gift to me carefully. [And] do thou, O my brother, [listen to] my request, and give to me the . . . which I have asked for. This man is the servant of the king [my] lord, but the carpenter with me has not finished (his work) in addition to the other presents; yet do thou, O brother, send the costly gift carefully." The mention here of the elephant's tusk and the throne, especially in juxtaposition, is an interesting reminder of the reign of Solomon later, and of the "ivory house which Ahab made" (1 Kings x. 18; xxii. 39; cf. Am. iii. 15); while the "sea of bronze," if the interpretation is correct, is a still more remarkable anticipation of 1 Kings vii. 23.

From some of the facts above enumerated, one may estimate, at their true value, the critical objections to the campaign of Othniel against the Mesopotamian forces of Cushan Rishathaim, as involving too wide an outlook for the early period of the Israelitish settlement. The resolution of

Othniel himself into a mythic eponym of some clan (Wellhausen's conjecture) is similarly reduced to shallow pedantry; and the same critic's denial, when discussing the episode of Balaam, that "the Midianites ever lived in the same part of the world" as the Moabites,—ignoring wholly Gen. xxxvi. 35, "who smote Midian in the field of Moab"—sinks to a mere bravado of hardy assertion.[1] It is the critic's own outlook which is too narrow, not that of the recording prophet which is too wide. Every ancient testimony which turns up on Palestinian or Egyptian soil, wherever the subject-matter is of a kindred tenor, tends to confirm the Bible and confute the critic. If Palestine itself could only have been dug up from end to end, as thoroughly as its surface has been explored, how many of the critics' card castles would have been buried in a few shovelfuls of that earth! The "Song of Deborah" (Judges v.) is allowed by most, even of the destructives, to bear every sign of genuine antiquity. But "the pen of the writer" (verse 14) was by them obelized as an anachronism, with an audacity which cowed our committees of the Old Testament Revision; and the writer's pen appears therefore transformed into "the marshal's staff." Perhaps now that the proof is incontestable, that the Babylonish script was spread all about the country some two hundred years before the date of the Song, or the period sung of, our Revision may be revised and the "pen" be restored to the "writer." The same reaction which the explorers, of whom Dr. Schliemann is the the typical specimen, caused in Homeric criticism, restoring belief in the Trojan War and the almost imperial dignity of Mycenæ, is in fact equally in progress as regards the early Hebrew annals. The only marvel now seems, that the art of writing, especially for literary purposes, should have reached the Ionic race so late—a race so rapidly acquisitive of all the arts of progress.

It becomes an interesting question how long this Bab-

[1] See Wellhausen's History of Israel (Engl. transl.), p. 357.

ylonish script prevailed in the Palestinian area. Professor Sayce gives the tenth century B. C. as the period when the Phœnician alphabet became established and current therein. But although further exploration, especially on the sites of Kirjath-sepher and the Philistine towns, might tend to solve this, and even throw light on the further questions whether "the book" of Ex. xvii. 14; Deut. xxxi. 24, was in fact kept in that script originally; yet these are questions quite secondary in interest to the further one of the language itself which made that script its vehicle. I have spoken of it above as Babylonish, but possibly Aramaic might more nearly describe its special affinities. A writer in the *Edinburgh Review* for July, 1892 (pp. 75, 76), says of the Amarna tablets: "These letters give us the language of the Semitic population of Palestine, about the time of the Hebrew Conquest," and adds, "But the language so recovered is not Hebrew, and we are thus shown that the Hebrews did not, as Wellhausen supposes, adopt the Canaanite language. Their speech was that of a pure desert tribe, which, through isolation had grown to differ from that of the settled Semitic peoples of Palestine, and which, in later times, stood to the vernacular of the lower classes in the same relationship which pure Arabic now holds to peasant dialects, in Syria and in Egypt.

"What is strictly to be called the Canaanite language is, therefore, that known through the brick epistles of the sixteenth century B. C. It is not Hebrew, nor does it agree with the later Phœnician of the monuments dating from the fourth and third centuries B. C. It is much nearer to Assyrian, yet not altogether the language of Assyrian writings." Thus "a rich vocabulary is present," "belonging, not to any adjacent country, but to Palestine itself, and older than the earliest date ascribed to the Old Testament," and substantially to be classed as Aramaic. The princes of Jerusalem thus learned their Aramaic not abroad, but at home, on the

lips of the peasantry. "In Moab it was the court language." See the Moabite stone, which shows "a very marked connection with the Aramaic of the contemporary Assyrian ["Syrian"?] inscriptions." The case of Naaman seems to show that, in Elisha's time, the Syrian and the tongue of the northern Israelites were mutually intelligible; the remonstrance to Rabshakeh, that the former and the speech of Jerusalem, in Hezekiah's time, were not so (2 Kings v. and xviii. 26). But we must await a larger consensus of Oriental scholars, and perhaps further material of evidence, before this difficult question can be settled. Meanwhile it is obvious that such sister dialects as the Babylonish proper, the Hebrew, the Phœnician, the Canaanitish and the Aramaic, mutually intelligible in 1600 B. C., might by reason of divergencies have ceased to be so by 1000 B. C., and much more so by 700 B. C.

But there remains one special passage in the patriarchal annals on which the Amarna tablets concentrate a clear light, and which, from the theological significance attached to it in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is second to none in its Christian interest. It is the character and position of "Melchizedek, king of Salem," the meeting of "Abram the Hebrew" with him, and, as leading up to these, the victorious campaign against Cherdorlaomer and the associated kings. In order to show the relations of these latter potentates with early Palestine, we must call in the aid of other cuneiform decipherments from Babylon itself. It will be seen that the remarkable and in some respects unique chapter, Genesis xiv., against which the keenest shafts of criticism have been lately pointed as being "a projection into the distant past of the western campaigns of the Assyrian kings," is now supported and confirmed by the explicit testimony of unimpeachable monuments.

To these critics the entire situation which, in the political relations of Babylon and Palestine, is assumed by the

author of Genesis, seemed not to be compatible with the ascertained facts of Babylonish history; while the possibility of an invasion of and supremacy in Palestine by potentates from the Euphrates valley, at so early a period as that of Abraham, was denied. It was sought to discredit the Genesis narrative further, through the names of the Canaanite "kings," by regarding them "as etymological plays on the catastrophe, which subsequently overwhelmed the cities of the plain." All except the last questionable allegation are *a priori* assumptions, similar to those which impugned the possibility of a Trojan War, through its alleged incompatibility with what was known or could be supposed of the respective powers of the Achæans and of any city on or near the Hellespont, and their possible relations with each other.

With regard to the facts now ascertained in early Babylonish history, hear Professor Sayce,[1] who says: "Syria and Palestine had been invaded by the armies of Babylon long before the age to which the history of Abraham can be referred. The founder of the first Semitic empire in Chaldea was a certain Sargon of Accad in Northern Babylonia, who was not only a great conqueror, but also a great patron of learning. He established a famous library in the city of Accad, and it was under his auspices that the standard Babylonish works on astrology and terrestrial omens were compiled. Nabonidos, the last king of independent Babylonia, who was a zealous antiquary and the pioneer of modern excavators, tells us that Naram-Sin, the son and successor of Sargon, reigned three thousand years before himself, or about 3750 B. C., and the early monuments discovered in Babylonia go to show that this date cannot be far from the truth. Now, a copy has been preserved to us of the annals of the reign of Sargon and of the first portion of his son's reign, which were drawn up, it should seem, while Naram-Sin was

[1] The Expository Times, Vol. iv. (No. 1, October, 1892) p. 14 ff.

on the throne, and from these we learn that Sargon not only led his armies to the shores of the Mediterranean, but actually reduced Syria and Palestine—'the land of the Amorites,' as it was termed by the Babylonians—to the condition of a conquered province. . . . He spent three years in conquering all countries in the west. He united all these lands so as to form but one empire. . . . He made the spoil pass over into the countries of the sea." The last phrase suggests Cyprus as reached by his conquest; in confirmation of which a native Cypriote cylinder, imitative of Babylonish workmanship, was actually procured by di Cesnola in that island, which describes its owner as "a servant of the deified Naram-Sin." The completeness of the conquest seems attested by the absence of further record of western expeditions, and by the next campaign being against the Sinaitic peninsula and Midian.

Again, after about fifteen hundred years, the annals of Ammi-Satana, king of Babylon 2215 B. C. (or perhaps seventy years later), ascribe to him the title of "king" of the land of "the Amorites." A brick from a temple at Larsa (*hod.* Senkereh) bears the name of Eri-Aku as reigning there, and as son of an Elamite, Kudur-Mabug, entitled "Father of the land of the Amorites." The son's power, we further learn, rested on Elamite support. The concentration later of power at Babylon absorbed both Larsa and Elam, and the Babylonish king added the Amorites to his titles. "Mabug" is an Elamite deity's name, in which language Kudur means "servant," and with another deity, Lagamar, held a foremost place in that local *cultus*. Thus Kudur-Lagamar is easily formed, which is represented in Hebrew by the "Chedorlaomer King of Elam" of Gen. xvi. 1 *seq.*, and Eri-Aku is the "Arioch" of the same, whose title of "Ellasar" is probably *al Larsa*, city of Larsa, with the *r* carelessly transferred to the end. Shinar is properly the southern province but its king Amraphel has not yet been found in cuneiform record;

and on "Tidal king of *nations*" (the last word probably a corruption) no light but that of conjecture has been thrown. The monuments show a corresponding state of things—that of several kingdoms in a loose political combination with a supremacy of Elam over the rest. Being from a Babylonish record, the kings of Shinar and Ellasar lead the list, but it is still Chedorlaomer whom the hostile kings had "served," and when the campaign begins, he is named alone as leader (ver. 5) and first in verse 9. Thus the correspondence of names confirms that of the political situation; and, "so far from its being incredible that Babylonish armies should have marched into Palestine, and that Babylonish princes should have received tribute there, in the time of Abraham, we find that Canaan had been included in a Babylonish empire centuries before, and that the arms of a Babylonish monarch had been carried even to the borders of Midian."

Thus, if Abraham crossed the Euphrates anywhere about 2000 B. C., or even earlier, he might have come on one of those waves of conquest which Babylon was sending westward at unknown intervals from the time of Sargon. He came of the conquering race, and this explains the position he holds as "a mighty prince among" his Hittite neighbors. To this he added later the prestige of personal victory, conquering a combination of potentates of that conquering race itself, in the interests of the country of his sojourn. Thus, though a sojourner, he stands on no precarious footing; he easily maintains a lofty and dignified bearing, and obtains his request without demur (Gen. xxiii.).

In all this we see how the situation harmonizes absolutely with the rediscovered evidence, suggesting, as before, a basis of contemporary documents for the narrative. And yet the whole of chap. xxiii. is given by the critics to some compiler of the "Priestly Code," following obscurely some clue of tradition more than thirteen hundred years after date —and this on the strength of some verbal phrases, such as,

"all that went in at the gate of his city," and the like (ver. 10). Truly we may say of our critics, "verborum minutiis rerum frangunt pondera."

But, to return to Chedorlaomer, Assyriologists place the Elamite supremacy, confederacy, invasion, and repulse in the earlier part of the reign of that Khammurabi, whom the monuments exhibit in its latter part as uniting these confederate kingdoms in one monarchy. Previous to which a Babylonish "empire" has little evidence to show.

But there is another curious verification of names in this narrative of Genesis xiv., which depends on the precise value of cuneiform symbols, and the double power of some of them as symbols of sound. The "Zuzim in Ham" of xiv. 5, are, in Deut. ii. 20, "Zamzummim" and "Ammon." The same groups of characters might, in fact, in cuneiform represent either pair of names. By finding therefore that cuneiform gives the key to the ambiguity, we infer a cuneiform original for the narrative of Genesis xiv. Thus several of the names, the political situation generally, and the precise relations of the potentates in Genesis, all fit a particular period in the annals of cuneiform record, and confirm one another, like pieces of a dissected map when adjusted in one. It is hardly possible to conceive a stronger phalanx of proof than these long-perished records have thus risen from the dead to furnish. Moreover by the fact of a cuneiform source the unique expression, "Abram the Hebrew," is at once explained. He had broken the tie which bound him to the land of his origin and was by this time externed. But may not the priest kings of Salem (of whom more anon) have kept cuneiform records, accessible to his descendants or to the compiler of his memoirs?

So far, however, we confront the tablets of Babylon and fetch our proofs from beyond the Euphrates. Next, for the latter part of the chapter, turn again to the Amarna tablets, still cuneiform although Egyptian, and we find Melchizedek

"stepping forth from behind the veil of mystery which enshrouded him, and becoming an intelligible character in history." Among the clay despatches of Amarna are some from the "Ebed-Tob" already mentioned. We find him there the king of Uru-salim (City of Salim) = Jerusalem, dependent indeed on Egypt, but not owing his royalty to the grace of Pharaoh, nor indeed inheriting it. The oracle of his God had conferred it upon him by virtue of his office of priest. That God bore the name of Salim = "Peace." Thus he is king locally of Jerusalem, but, "like the descendant of David whom Isaiah beheld in prophetic vision (Isa. vii. 6), he was a 'Prince of Peace,'" "without father, without mother," to inherit from, unindebted to genealogy (ἀγενεαλόγητος, Heb. vii. 3) for his dignity. In that dignity Ebed-Tob was a successor of the Melchizedek who showed honor to Abram and received it from him. For "Abram had defeated the invading host which had come from the banks of the Euphrates, and he had driven the conqueror from the soil of Canaan. He had restored peace to a country of which, as the Amarna tablets assure us, Jerusalem was already an important capital and a sacred sanctuary. The king, the priest of the God of Peace, naturally comes forward to greet him on his return from the overthrow of the foreigner, and to bless him in the name of the deity whose priest he was. It was equally natural that Abram should dedicate a portion of the spoils he had won to a God in whose presence wars and enmities had an end." Thus another mystery of the ages is solved; in his successor "Ebed-Tob," Melchizedek is before us, as the first king who claimed to rule "by the grace of God," and was king because he was priest.

Traditional forms descend often unchanged through centuries, especially in the East. In southern Egypt Professor Sayce found, inscribed near a great boulder, to which a local sanctity probably attached, some forms of benediction, in the names of local deities, in Aramaic letters of the

sixth century B. C., and by the hands of Semitic travellers—pilgrims we might perhaps call them. These closely resemble the form used by Melchizedek, "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God." Examples are, "Blessed of Horus be Gamlan Sartsan," "Blessed of Isis be Hagah." Only on two inscriptions, Phœnician and Aramaic, but both in Egypt, had the form, outside the Old Testament, been previously known. Professor Sayce ascribes to it a character "purely Canaanite," and ventures a conjecture that the above examples "may have been inscribed by some of the idolatrous companions of Jeremiah. The forms of the letters would well agree with such a date."

The form "Uru-Salem" may also claim a brief comment. "A lexical tablet from the library of Nineveh" gives *Uru* as = Assyrian *Alu* "city." It is therefore an ancient Canaanite word, known to these ancient scribes through the Babylonish supremacy and consequent intercourse. The "Babylonish garment" of Joshua vii. 21, lit. "garment of Shinar," shows that commerce continued when supremacy had passed away. By the common later Hebrew change of ו into י, this *Uru-* became *Jeru-*. But "Salem" alone was current for the same spot, and occurs in inscriptions enumerating Palestinian towns captured by Ramses II. and III. Other less known sites attend it, notably some in the Joshuan catalogue of tribally allotted towns, e. g., Hadashah = Newlands (xv. 41), Aphaga (Aphekah, ver. 53), Migdol (Migdol-gad of Judah, ver. 37), Hebron, and others. The dry enumerative lists of the Joshuan allotment are among the least interesting passages of the Old Testament to the ordinary reader. Yet they are fraught with a power of proof in every name. No merely compiling scribe of the late ages could have known them with the minuteness in which they are presented. Nothing but unquestionably genuine antiquity could have ensured the attestation which they now receive from this resurrection of the past. We have now an outline of history

into which Melchizedek exactly fits as a foreground figure. We establish in Jerusalem and other cities of Palestine a condition of lettered archives earlier than the Exodus, and thereby raise the presumption of a documentary basis, contemporary or nearly so with the facts, for the entire patriarchal record reaching back to the origin of the nations. The enormous coil of "critical" cobwebs which is thus swept from the venerable face of that record, can easily be estimated for himself by any well-informed reader.